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CEPPS/IRI Quarterly Report: April-June 2005
MEXICO: MORE RESPONSIVE MEXICAN POLITICAL PARTIES
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Total Budget: \$872,500 (\$622,500 obligated for FY '05 and FY '06)
Expenses to date: \$171,450

I. SUMMARY

IRI is implementing a comprehensive and targeted program for each of Mexico's three major political parties at the national, state, and local levels as well as with the minor political parties (PVEM, PT and Convergencia), as warranted. Program participants include elected officials, political party members (including youth secretariats), and government staff and administrators. IRI is also engaging Mexican civil society groups and local media, in coordination with events directed at the Mexican political parties. In developing its work plans, IRI coordinates with the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) and other international organizations, including the Organization of American States, the Woodrow Wilson International Center, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, and Management Systems International (MSI) to ensure that program activities have maximum impact and to avoid duplication of efforts.

II. BACKGROUND

Mexico's political parties continue to undergo a process of dynamic change that began three decades ago and culminated with the election of PAN presidential candidate Vicente Fox in the year 2000. That election ended a 71-year one-party rule by the PRI, and introduced a new democratic competitiveness into Mexican politics. As USAID/Mexico has noted, "the main challenge to Mexican democracy in the next five to ten years is to harness the best of a competitive political system and to enable government to meet the country's complex social, economic, and political needs."

In the absence of PRI hegemony, candidates from the three major parties (PRI, PAN and PRD) and several smaller parties are competing for votes in transparent elections at the national, state and local level. This new competitive political dynamic has increased

incentive to the parties to develop skills for communicating with, and responding to, Mexican constituents. A major challenge is the centralized and insular nature of the Mexican political party structure. Discussions and reform initiatives are present, to varying degrees, within each of the Mexican political parties. But to accomplish meaningful reform, the parties will have to become more inclusive and responsive in order to achieve greater accountability, responsiveness and to consolidate multi-party democracy.

III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

On October 1, 2004, IRI began implementing the cooperative agreement as a continuation and expansion of activities carried out under previous CEPPS Leader Award, DGC-A-00-01-0004-00.

As of end of this quarter, IRI has incurred cumulative total expenditures of \$134,681. These expenditures reflect the implementation, to date, of activities outlined in the 12-month work plan delivered to USAID-Mexico in October 2004. Following is a description of activities for this quarter by political party.

Partido Acción Nacional (PAN)

District Office & Constituent Outreach Training Initiative

During this quarter, IRI held the 5th, 6th and 7th trainings in a series of 8 training sessions in the ***District Office and Constituent Outreach Training Initiative***. These training sessions included the combined participation of more than 60 PAN leaders including more than 15 members of Congress. The training series is designed to assist the PAN and its elected officials to improve accountability to citizens at the district level through district office management and targeted communication strategies. The training presentation developed by IRI is based on the model used by U.S. members of Congress in their district offices. IRI has modified the U.S. model to reflect more party-based methods of district office management and constituent outreach, and to account for the fact that elected officials in Mexico are barred by law from serving consecutive terms.

The fifth training of IRI's series of PAN ***District Office & Constituent Outreach Training Initiative*** was held in Aguascalientes on April 6–8, 2005. PAN party members attending the event included 2 members of congress and 19 district office staffers, all from the state of Aguascalientes. Feedback from event participants was collected via anonymous evaluation forms. Participants rated this event as “excellent,” in particular the information provided on communication strategies.

The sixth training of IRI's series of PAN ***District Office & Constituent Outreach Training Initiative*** was held in Veracruz on June 3–4, 2005. PAN party members attending the event included 2 members of congress and 22 district office staffers, all from the states of Veracruz and Tlaxcala. Feedback from event participants was

collected via evaluation forms, which overall rated the event as “excellent,” in particular the information provided on communication strategies.

The seventh in IRI’s series of PAN *District Office & Constituent Outreach Training Initiative* was held on June 10-11, 2005, at Quintana Roo. PAN party members attending the event included 14 members of congress and 1 district office staffer. Overall, the PAN members of congress represented eight states (Quintana Roo, D.F., Guanajuato, Puebla, Sinaloa, Michoacan, Baja California, Nuevo Leon). Among the PAN members attending were Gerardo Priego Tapia of the PAN National Executive Committee, Said Mendoza Mendoza of the PAN National Executive Committee Party Strengthening Secretariat, Congresswoman Miriam Arabian (PAN – Puebla), who chairs the PAN’s internal committee that oversees District Office implementation, and Congresswoman Elizabeth Yanez (PAN – Queretaro). Congresswoman Miriam Arabian (PAN–Puebla) is the key PAN party member responsible for promoting this IRI initiative within the PAN. Anonymous feedback from event participants was collected via evaluation forms. Overall feedback rated this training as “excellent.”

Accion Juvenil (youth organization of the PAN party): Regional Retreats

In the previous quarter, IRI coordinated with the Accion Juvenil National Secretariat to provide training and other support for a series of five weekend retreats focusing on youth strategy for the 2006 elections. These five retreats were supported by the Social Outreach and Municipal Strengthening Committees of the PAN National Committee. Accion Juvenil asked IRI to provide training on strategic communications, media relations and voter mobilization tactics. IRI agreed to provide these trainings and partially co-sponsor the five retreats, which were designed to cover every one of Mexico’s 31 states, bringing together a competitively selected group of youth leaders from various localities. However, IRI was only able to provide training and support for three of the five retreats (conflicting dates prevented IRI staff and trainers from attending the others). The retreats that received IRI support were held in Tecate, Baja California (Apr 1–3), Tlaxcala, Tlaxcala (May 13–15) and Torreón, Coahuila (May 27–29). IRI trainings at these three-day retreats were supplemented with outside consultants (paid for by Accion Juvenil) who provided additional trainings on leadership, communication and voter mobilization, and with closed workshops (PAN only) designed to develop internal strategies and motivational capacity for the 2006 elections. Though IRI was not present for the internal workshops, anecdotal evidence was received indicating that the youth felt better prepared as a result of IRI’s trainings prior to the workshops. In total, IRI was able to train more than 300 youth via this initiative.

At the retreat in Tecate, IRI staff conducted two training seminars: one on communication strategies, and one on voter mobilization tactics used in the United States. A total of 70 youth attended this retreat, 52 of which submitted evaluations. The evaluations rated IRI’s overall trainings in Tecate as “good-to-excellent.”* More than half of the respondents identified IRI’s strategic communications training as the most

* IRI provides for participant feedback evaluations based on three criteria: 1) quality of information provided; 2) probability that information will be applied; and 3) overall quality of presentation. Participants rate each of these criteria on the following basis: 1-poor, 2-fair, 3-average, 4-good and 5-excellent.

useful; IRI's U.S. voter mobilization tactics received virtually no responses. In response to what could be improved, a large number of respondents said that IRI's trainings should be conducted on a more regular basis.

At the retreat in Tlaxcala, IRI staff was accompanied by fluent-Spanish trainer Mike May, a legislative assistant with U.S. Congressman Tom Davis (R-VA) and who has significant experience working on national and state political campaigns. Mr. May was once a candidate himself in the state of Virginia. At the retreat, IRI trained participants on voter mobilization and campaign strategies. IRI staff also conducted a pilot test of a campaign simulation exercise (developed by IRI) that requires participants to form campaign teams of 8–12 members each. (This simulation involves a hypothetical mayoral campaign in a typical medium-sized town in Mexico, with a young fictitious PAN candidate facing off against two more-experienced candidates from opposing parties.) Over 120 youth attended this retreat, representing some sixty different municipalities from nine states as well as Mexico City, D.F. A total of 108 participants completed evaluations of the event. The evaluations rated IRI's trainings in Tlaxcala as "average-to-good." This rating was lower than that given of other IRI trainings. However, quite a large number of participants (both verbally during the event and in writing via the evaluations submitted to IRI) expressed a very strong and enthusiastic interest in IRI's campaign simulation exercise. (IRI will permanently incorporate this simulation into its Mexico program youth training repertoire). The Tlaxcala evaluations also strongly reiterated two of the most frequent criticisms found when conducting work in Mexico—namely, Mexicans prefer native Spanish speakers and case studies/examples specific to Mexico. IRI continues to adapt to this frequent criticism; however, IRI also believes that some exposure to other democratic political systems can be beneficial to Mexican political parties, even if only a minority of participants recognize such value. (Strong nationalist sentiment in Mexico may also partially explain these results).

At the retreat in Torreón, IRI staff conducted a media and communication strategies training. A total of 132 youth (ranging 16–30 years in age) attended this retreat, 81 of whom completed evaluations about the event. The evaluations rated IRI's trainings in Torreón as "good-to-excellent." Both of these trainings received high ratings; the main suggestion provided by the youth was, once again, to make these trainings more frequent. This suggestion appears frequently when working with youth in Mexico and was the main impetus for IRI's development of a campaign simulation exercise (described in the paragraph above) representative of Mexico's political landscape. However, there was insufficient time to prepare this exercise for presentation at Torreón.

Partido Revolucionario Democratico (PRD)

No activities were conducted with the PRD this quarter. IRI continues discussions with PRD political advisors and other PRD party members regarding scheduling of activities with the PRD. IRI has discussed a proposed work plan regarding training topics, pending election of new leaders at the PRD National Executive Committee. This work plan is pending.

Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI)

Due to organizational changes and the pending July gubernatorial elections for PRI-EDOMEX, IRI did not conduct training seminars with the PRI-EDOMEX this quarter. IRI continued frequent communications with representatives PRI-EDOMEX, regarding a delegation visit to Washington D.C. and future training sessions for newly-elected officials and their staff.

Multipartisan Initiatives

IRI did not conduct any multi-partisan activities in Mexico during this quarter.

IV. RESULTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

As outlined in the proposal, IRI's main overall objectives are to strengthen the Mexican parties' ability to become more accountable to the citizenry and to deepen Mexican civil society's monitoring of the policy process. The results and accomplishments obtained this quarter for each of the five IRI objectives contained in the proposal are as follows:

1. Decentralize political party functions and decision-making.

Result 1: Core party leaders and party members comprehend the benefits of decentralization and support democratization strengthening initiatives.

All three of IRI's *District Office & Constituent Outreach Training Series* trainings with the PAN were well-attended. Responses on the anonymous evaluation forms collected after the events indicated that a majority of participants found the trainings informative and practical. A majority were satisfied with the quality of the presentations and IRI's ability to adapt the U.S. model to Mexico's political reality. Deputy Myriam Arabian, a PAN member of congress representing the state of Puebla, attended the training at Quintana Roo and advised that she has met with success in implementing one of IRI's specific district office recommendations, i.e. to establish a panel of volunteer, expert community advisors to advise her and her district office staff on specific matters.

Additionally, other PAN members attending included Gerardo Priego Tapia, ranking member of the PAN National Executive Committee, Said Mendoza Mendoza of the PAN National Executive Committee Party Strengthening Secretariat, and Congresswoman Elizabeth Yanez (PAN-Queretaro).

All expressed their strong support for further training seminars by IRI directed at the PAN leadership and elected officials. This desire for continued training sessions indicates that participants see specific benefits associated with decentralization, which is one of the major underlying tenets of the training material. This receptiveness by PAN suggests growing support for democracy strengthening initiatives.

2. **Encourage stronger two-way internal communications between national, state and local party structures.**

Result 2: Two-way communication between party structures at national, state and local levels is better coordinated.

In selecting dates for the trainings, the PAN National Executive Committee's Office of Constituent Outreach in Mexico City worked hard to ensure that the dates for the trainings did not conflict with other activities, and that selected dates were conducive to high attendance rates by those to whom the training was targeted (this indicates stronger two-way communication in the sense that the national party structure did not impose dates or expectations upon the local and state-level structures, but rather coordinated with them to achieve maximum benefit and high attendance.) Furthermore, the two district office trainings this quarter were executed without any logistical delays or communication problems between the PAN in Mexico City and the local state office staff. This is a positive indicator in terms of decentralized and supportive decision-making between the central and state/local PAN party structures.

(See **Attachment A** for attendance rates of PAN members of congress and their staffers at all IRI district office trainings conducted to-date. Since only a very small number of PAN state-level legislators have attended the trainings, this data is not included in the attached table. Greater efforts may be needed to promote the training among members and staff of the state legislative bodies in order to increase such attendance rates, or alternatively, IRI may implement a subsequent district office initiative at the state level—see **VI. Future Activities: Multi-partisan Initiatives**).

3. **Increase capacity to promote voter participation and input.**

Result 3: Party platforms and communications are based on input from citizens and representatives of civil society, independent of campaign cycles.

One PAN member of congress, Deputy Miriam Arabian, has appointed non-paid citizen advisors, which is a recommendation included in IRI's District Office training. The objective of having citizen advisors is to improve access to the citizenry and improve the elected official's image of local accountability by representing local leaders and experts in her district, as opposed to leaders and experts in Mexico City. IRI has not yet detected whether or not input from local citizen advisors has had any influence on PAN Party platform and/or party communications.

4. Improve technical party capacity.

Result 4: Parties utilize new knowledge, methods and technology effectively.

Establishing a panel of citizen advisors as described above indicates that a PAN member of congress is utilizing a new method for constituent outreach to improve party accountability to the citizenry via district office activities.

IRI will hold follow-up trainings and sustain contact with the PAN/Accion Juvenil youth that participated in the retreats, to determine to what extent, if any, the PAN utilizes the new knowledge and methods provided by IRI. Though IRI was not present for the internal workshops at these retreats, anecdotal evidence was received indicating that the youth felt better prepared as a result of IRI's trainings.

5. Improve dialogue, coordination and cooperation between parties.

Result 5: Dialogue, coordination and cooperation between the three major parties increases.

V. EVALUATION

District Office and Constituent Outreach Initiative

IRI implements district office and constituent outreach training seminars to provide motivation and strategic guidance for the advancement of democracy by teaching political parties how to better communicate with citizens. If parties communicate better with the citizenry, this should in turn empower citizens to hold their government more accountable.

IRI continues to be pleased with its progress in successfully adapting the U.S. model for district office and constituent outreach to the Mexican political reality. The predominant criticism indicated on the anonymous evaluation forms collected at the pilot training in Puebla in June 2004 was that the US model lacked applicability—or at a minimum was only partially useful—for Mexican members of congress. Underlying this criticism is the fact that the U.S. model assumes that if an *elected incumbent* responds to constituents' needs, regardless of party, he or she will be re-elected, while the Mexican model assumes that if a *political party* responds to constituents' needs, the political party will improve its image and the party member becomes more likely to rise to a higher position within the party. The amount of financial support available to US members of congress versus Mexican members of congress is also vastly disproportionate.

To respond to the participants' critiques and make IRI's strategies applicable to Mexico's political reality, IRI made substantial content changes to its training materials and presentation techniques. Since then, the anonymous evaluation forms collected following each training session clearly confirm that these modifications have progressively improved participants' assessment of the applicability of IRI's district office and

constituent outreach training. Achieving this required removing certain components and recommendations, emphasizing both party accountability and member accountability as important objectives, replacing examples and anecdotes from the U.S. with analogous Mexican ones[†], focusing on low-cost techniques and cost-saving measures, and proposing strategies based on level of *resourcefulness*, as opposed to level of *resources*. Nevertheless, some aspects of the US model remain useful as strategies for improving local accountability in Mexico (for example, giving district office staff greater autonomy in setting agendas and organizing events).

IRI has witnessed sustained PAN interest and participation in implementing this initiative throughout Mexico in order to cover all 31 states. Attendance has included elected members, in addition to staffers, and participants have shown a willingness to travel to neighboring states to attend the training.

As indicated in **Attachment A**, the trainings generally achieved between 50% and 80% coverage.[‡] The highest coverage so far has been at the training conducted in Mexico City (this is expected, since it is the most convenient location for PAN members of congress and their staff to attend).

Accion Juvenil (youth organization of the PAN party): Regional Retreats

Based on anonymous participant evaluations and first-hand conversations with youth at the three retreats for which IRI provided trainings, it is apparent that activities targeting youth in Mexico need to be conducted in a different manner than events targeting political parties, candidates and elected officials of all ages. Youth trainings should focus on:

- i) inspiring the youth,
- ii) sustaining national pride, while addressing real shortcomings in the system and avoiding the false perception that IRI promotes the U.S. system above all others, and
- iii) providing more dynamic opportunities for creative interaction, such as hands-on media skills workshops involving videotaping and group critique exercises, and the recent campaign simulation exercise implemented at the youth retreat in Tlaxcala.

Along with these characteristics, IRI believes another unique factor in working with youth is the possibility to cultivate future leaders. Greater impact in this regard can come from IRI having a more permanent presence (e.g. field office) in Mexico, or from implementing a more focused training series that would allow for participants to have repeated interaction with IRI, even if it requires working at a more local or regional level and sacrificing the nationwide coverage achieved via the initiatives

[†] Instead of interjecting anecdotes related to US district offices, IRI trainers interact dynamically with participants to obtain Mexican anecdotes. These anecdotes provide a basis for discussion and are incorporated into the IRI trainer's repertoire for future trainings.

[‡] The low coverage of Veracruz members at the training in Baja California is an anomaly, since a future training is planned for that state and will be easier to attend for reasons of proximity.

implemented to date. A youth-targeted train-the-trainer initiative would achieve both of these results. Before advancing to this next phase, IRI will attempt to work with youth wings of the PRI and the PRD, in order to confirm whether this analysis applies overall to youth in Mexico, and not just to the youth of the PAN party. One problem worth mentioning is that, in working with the PAN youth, IRI has noticed that the youth leaders falsely perceive IRI as a “funding” institute for their events. IRI is working with PAN leaders at the national level to address this misconception, in order to emphasize to the youth that IRI provides technical expertise, not funding.

VI. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Partido Accion Nacional (PAN)

District Office / Constituent Outreach

The eighth and ninth District Office / Constituent Outreach trainings with the PAN will be held in the month of August in Zacatecas and Villa Hermosa. IRI plans to extend this training series and will likely continue conducting these trainings with the PAN well into Fall 2005. Following the 2006 federal elections, IRI will develop this course into a freshman orientation course for newly elected members of the national congress.

IRI has continuously updated and improved the district office workshop through participant feedback. To supplement this feedback, IRI is planning to arrange for PAN members of congress (who have participated in this workshop) to visit U.S. congressional district offices to see first-hand how this type of work is conducted in the United States. Next quarter IRI will attempt to conduct at least one of these visits.

Campaign Finance – Mexican model

IRI is organizing an electoral reform conference August 9–11 in Brazil. One of the main components of this reform is campaign finance. Brazil currently has a 100% privately funded form of campaign finance, and there is a proposal in the Brazilian legislature to switch to public funding of campaigns. At IRI’s request, two Mexican members of congress have agreed to travel to Brazil to present the pros and cons of public financing, since this system is currently in place in Mexico.

IRI believes that offering Mexican politicians the opportunity to participate regionally in Latin America (and potentially non-Western Hemisphere countries) augments their understanding of their own political reform initiatives, and provides them with tangible returns by affording them the opportunity to share their party’s successes with democratic entities and individuals from neighboring countries. Participation in the Brazil conference will not be funded by this project (i.e. funds available via separate Brazil CEPPS grant).

Partido Revolucionario Democratico (PRD)

No specific activities are currently scheduled with the PRD. IRI remains in communication with PRD party members and has discussed conducting specific activities with the PRD next quarter, including developing a plan to implement the District Office / Constituent Outreach trainings with PRD members of congress, and their staff. Though the PRD has expressed interest in this initiative, further discussions are on hold pending further internal organizational clarity on how this initiative will be implemented.

Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI)

District Office / Constituent Outreach Trainings

The PRI has expressed interest in implementing the District Office / Constituent Outreach initiative with the PRI, but probably only at the state level. More discussions with state-level PRI officials are required before moving ahead with this initiative.

PRI State of Mexico / School of Candidates, Government Officials and Public Servants

IRI remains in communication with PRI officials in the State of Mexico to re-instate its training initiatives at the *School of Candidates, Government Officials and Public Servants*, located in the state capital of Toluca. IRI will keep the USAID/Mexico Mission informed of any activities that may arise with the PRI/EDOMEX next quarter.

Multipartisan Initiatives

CRS (Congressional Research Service) Exchange Visits

Objective and non-partisan research—through which legislators receive unbiased information on timely and relevant topics—is a necessary first step toward developing an objective legislative body in Mexico, especially given the new multi-partisan political competitiveness that has emerged since the 2000 presidential election. IRI has proposed to work with the Mexican equivalent of the CRS to strengthen the Mexican Congress' own research capabilities. Like the district office program, IRI plans to work with CRS in Washington to adapt its structure of services to the Mexican system. A competitive selection for exchange visits for legislative staffers and key party members, and country visits by CRS staffers from the U.S., will be included as part of this activity, as person-to-person contact will be an effective way to initiate a sustained communication between CRS and their Mexican counterparts.

During this quarter, IRI staff in Washington, DC, held a second meeting with specialists of the Latin America/Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Trade Division of the Congressional Research Service to discuss IRI's proposed CRS Initiative. The CRS specialists agreed (pending internal approval) to work with IRI to implement the initiative. IRI will follow up by meeting with the Mexican congressional research entities[§] in Mexico in order to develop a work plan and timeline for implementing the exchange visits.

² Mexico does not have a single non-partisan entity responsible for conducting research for its Congress; rather there are several such entities that conduct research in specific fields, and oversight of these entities

EDOMEX State Legislature: District Office / Constituent Outreach Trainings

This quarter IRI met with local deputies in Toluca, State of Mexico, to discuss signing an MOU for technical assistance to assist the state legislature in addressing constituent issues. Specifically, the MOU would involve implementing IRI's District Office / Constituent Outreach initiative to members from all parties in the EDOMEX legislature. The majority speaker of the EDOMEX state legislature tentatively agreed to sign an MOU with IRI to implement District Office / Constituent Outreach training, on a multi-partisan basis, for all members of the state congress. Signature of the MOU has been postponed, although both the PAN and the PRI have stated that they would like to sign this MOU prior to the EDOMEX gubernatorial election in July 2005. If the MOU is signed next quarter, IRI will seek to formalize a definitive work plan with the EDOMEX legislature, and submit such work plan to the USAID/Mexico Mission.

To ensure quality Q&A and open discussion, IRI will hold its district office trainings with only one party at a time; IRI's objective would be to cover each of the state's localities/districts for each of three major parties**. IRI specifically discussed an initial event in Valle Bravo with only the PRI deputies (24). The event was to be potentially inaugurated by Governor Montiel and/or the PRI pre-candidate Enrique Peña.

is assigned to members of the national congress on a partisan basis.

** Members of the smaller Mexican parties (e.g. PT, Convergencia, PVEM) may be invited to attend, if requested by the PAN, PRD or PRI.

Attachment A: “Coverage” of PAN District Office Training Initiative

Location of training	State attending training	# of PAN deputies represented at training (incl. deputies and/or their staff)	# of PAN deputies in that state	Cumulative “Coverage” (as a % of total PAN deputies)
Puebla	Puebla	3	6	50%
Querétaro	Querétaro	2	4	50%
Rosarito, BC	Baja California	4	8	50%
Rosarito, BC	Sinaloa	1	3	33%
Rosarito, BC	Sonora	4	5	80%
Rosarito, BC	Veracruz	1	13	8%
Congreso, DF	Mexico	15	19	79%
Congreso, DF	Distrito Federal	8	9	89%
Aguascalientes	Aguascalientes	2	3	66%
Veracruz	Veracruz	1	13	16%
Veracruz	Tlaxcala	1	1	100%
Quintana Roo	Quintana Roo	2	2	100%
Quintana Roo	Distrito Federal	6	9	> 100%
Quintana Roo	Baja California	1	8	63%
Quintana Roo	Sinaloa	1	3	67%
Quintana Roo	Guanajuato	1	15	7%
Quintana Roo	Puebla	1	6	67%
Quintana Roo	Michoacan	1	6	17%
Quintana Roo	Nuevo Leon	1	3	33%